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*NORTH VIETNAMESE RELATIONS WITH THAILAND:
EVOLUTION OF DRV POLICY SINCE THE PARIS PEACE AGREEMENT*

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20 MARCH 1975

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FOREWORD

In the wake of the January 1973 Paris peace accord, North Vietnam has made clear its desire to develop diplomatic and economic ties throughout the world, and Thailand has been a key target of Hanoi's efforts.

This report reviews Hanoi's policy toward Thailand during the past two years as reflected in the media, with focus on the period since May 1974, and most particularly on the signs of controversy in Hanoi and shifts in policy since November 1974.

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NORTH VIETNAMESE RELATIONS WITH THAILAND: EVOLUTION OF DRV POLICY SINCE THE PARIS PEACE AGREEMENT

S U M M A R Y

1. In the two years since the Vietnam peace accord, there have been periodic indications in the media of efforts on both sides to improve North Vietnam-Thai relations. Hanoi treated Bangkok's Thanom Kittikhachon military administration with notable circumspection for a brief period after the January 1973 Paris agreement. However, harsh criticism of the regime resumed in April in connection with Bangkok's continued cooperation with U.S. policy in Indochina, with attacks on Thanom assailing the movement of U.S. military commands from South Vietnam to Thailand and the U.S. bombing of Cambodia from bases in Thailand. The overthrow of the Thanom government in October 1973 was welcomed by the North Vietnamese, although they adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward the new civilian caretaker administration under Prime Minister Sanya Thammasak.
2. Some six months after the Sanya government assumed power in Bangkok, a major article in the North Vietnamese party paper NHAN DAN on 12 May 1974 reacted positively to statements by Thai Government officials that they were seeking to normalize Thai-DRV relations. The article for the first time enunciated North Vietnamese conditions for normalization of relations with Thailand and was notably conciliatory in calling for an end to Thai-U.S. "collusion" against Vietnam instead of reiterating the standard demand for a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Thailand. NHAN DAN also demanded that Bangkok release all the Vietnamese residents in Thailand who had been "illegally detained." The Thai Government in fact announced the release of some incarcerated Vietnamese aliens in June and subsequent Hanoi comment did not cite the release of the remainder as a precondition for normal relations.
3. Late in September 1974 a new channel of Thai-DRV communications was opened when Hanoi for the first time granted a visa for a Thai journalist to visit North Vietnam. However, Hanoi maintained public silence on this new development until it took issue with Bangkok's reporting of the journalist's interviews with DRV spokesmen. Thus, Hanoi's first acknowledgment of the visit came on 18 October, when it objected to Bangkok accounts of the journalist's reports that North Vietnam wanted to establish cultural relations. VNA quoted

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an interview with a DRV Foreign Ministry spokesman who said that it was unrealistic to talk about improving relations on the governmental level because of Bangkok's "hostile policy" toward Indochina.

4. In early December Hanoi revealed that it had for the first time proposed negotiations aimed at improving Thai-North Vietnamese relations. However, there were stiff preconditions to the talks in proposed in a letter dated 27 November from DRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh to his Thai counterpart in the Sanya government. The letter flatly demanded the withdrawal of U.S. military forces prior to talks with Thailand, a stance which was considerably less flexible than that in the May NHAN DAN article which had more vaguely called for an end to U.S.-Thai "collusion" against Vietnam as a precondition for "normalization" of relations.

5. Seven weeks after the early December Hanoi release of its November proposal, the DRV publicized another statement suggesting the likelihood that Trinh had favored a less intransigent position on the preconditions for talks, but that dissension among DRV leaders regarding rapprochement with Thailand had resulted in the foreign minister's being overruled on the language of the November letter sent in his name. Thus, on 21 January this year Hanoi belatedly released Trinh's foreign policy report, which he had delivered to the DRV National Assembly on 24 December, in which he quoted passages from the November letter to the Thai foreign minister which were strikingly different from the version of the letter as released by Hanoi on 3 December: Trinh quoted the letter as saying that talks could take place if U.S. forces in Thailand were "forbidden from being used against neighboring countries," not that U.S. forces must be withdrawn.

6. On 30 January, nine days after Trinh's National Assembly speech was released, there was additional evidence that the pendulum has swung further in a moderate direction: Hanoi released another Trinh letter dated 25 January, in response to a 30 December letter from his Thai counterpart, which spelled out a position even more flexible than that outlined in Trinh's National Assembly report. Trinh did not cite actions regarding the U.S. troops as necessary preconditions for Thai-DRV negotiations, but rather included Bangkok's "prevention" of these forces being used against Indochina in a list of principles for relations.

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7. The Trinh letter indirectly responded to the Thai Foreign Minister's expression of concern about Vietnamese support for subversion and insurrection in Thailand, endorsing the principle of noninterference in each other's internal affairs. The letter seemed calculated to give the impression that Hanoi was open to broader regional cooperation, endorsing--as Trinh had in his National Assembly report--the concept of a Southeast Asian "zone of peace" which has been promoted by members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), including Thailand.

8. The 25 January Trinh letter was dated only the day before the Thai elections and seemed calculated to place Hanoi's most flexible position on the record when Bangkok was forming a new government. Since the election low-level Hanoi comment has continued to press Bangkok on the issue of U.S. military forces in Thailand. However, it appears that Hanoi will await concrete moves by the new Thai Government regarding the presence of the forces and their relationship to the Indochina conflict before releasing an authoritative North Vietnamese appraisal of the government's policies and DRV-Thai relations.

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NORTH VIETNAMESE RELATIONS WITH THAILAND: EVOLUTION OF DRV POLICY SINCE THE PARIS PEACE AGREEMENT

I. DRV COMMENT ON THAILAND, JANUARY 1973-OCTOBER 1974

REVIVAL OF CRITICISM OF BANGKOK AFTER TWO-MONTH HIATUS

Since the January 1973 Paris peace agreement, there have been repeated shifts in the treatment of Thailand in Hanoi media. Immediately following the Paris agreement a hiatus in the propaganda invective aimed at the Thai Government appeared to reflect Hanoi's willingness to moderate its traditionally hostile attitude toward the Thanom Kittikhachon military regime. Thus, where Hanoi media before the Vietnam peace agreement assailed Thanom personally as a "vile U.S. lackey," for a few weeks following the signing of the Vietnam accord--when Hanoi was still assessing postwar U.S. intentions--the media instead used such neutral terms as "Kittikhachon, Thailand's leader" and "Thai authorities" in referring to the Bangkok government.

Harsher Hanoi criticism of Bangkok reemerged only when Thailand's major role in the U.S. commitment in Southeast Asia was made clear by such developments as the transfer of U.S. military command headquarters from South Vietnam to Thailand and the continuing bombing of Cambodia by Thai-based U.S. planes. By April 1973 Hanoi comment resumed diatribes against the "reactionary Thai ruling clique" and again attacked the Bangkok leaders by name. Hanoi media applauded the overthrow of the Thanom government in October 1973, but the North Vietnamese appeared to adopt a wait-and-see attitude toward the new civilian caretaker administration under Prime Minister Sanya Thammasak.

MAY 1974 RESPONSE TO THAI PROBES ON NORMALIZED RELATIONS

Hanoi's attitude toward the Sanya government was spelled out in a 12 May 1974 article in the party paper NHAN DAN which referred to unspecified statements by members of the Sanya administration that they were seeking to normalize relations with the DRV but that their efforts had not received a response. The article, attributed to "Observer," criticized Sanya's government for failing to match its actions to its professions of goodwill, but it affirmed the Vietnamese people's desire for friendly relations with Thailand,

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for the first time offering Hanoi's conditions for improving relations. Significantly, the Observer article stopped short of Hanoi's usual demand for the total withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Thailand. Instead it asserted that Bangkok must "stop its collusion" with Washington against the Vietnamese, cease its alleged slanders against Hanoi's intentions toward Thailand, and release Vietnamese residents in Thailand who have been "illegally detained."

DEMAND FOR HALT TO
THAI-U.S. "COLLUSION"

With its demand for an end to Thai cooperation with the United States against Vietnam, Observer seemed to signal that Hanoi was willing to improve its relations with Bangkok even while U.S. military forces were in Thailand, as long as those forces were restricted from being used in Vietnam. Later authoritative North Vietnamese statements did reiterate Hanoi's call for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Thailand; but, like the Observer article, they focused on Bangkok's obligation to see that its territory was not used for actions against Indochina. Thus, for example, an 18 May 1974 DRV Foreign Ministry spokesman's statement on the withdrawal of another increment of U.S. military personnel and aircraft asserted that: "The United States must immediately and completely withdraw its military forces from, and dismantle all its military bases in, Thailand." But regarding Bangkok's role, it said only that it "must not put the Thai territory at the disposal of U.S. imperialists in their aggression and intervention against Laos and the countries of Indochina."*

CALL FOR THAI RELEASE
OF DETAINED VIETNAMESE

Observer's demand for the release of Vietnamese residents receded as a major issue in subsequent months. Hanoi may have been sufficiently satisfied by the June 1974 Thai Government announcement of the release of 107 incarcerated Vietnamese aliens, although the move was criticized in a 27 June DRV Foreign Ministry spokesman's statement which demanded the release of other Vietnamese still being detained and an end to "repression" of Vietnamese residents in Thailand. The question of the Vietnamese in Thailand was not pressed in later authoritative DRV statements on the question of relations between the two countries.

* Hanoi had not issued official statements in response to earlier phases of the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Thailand. The initial U.S.-Thai agreement in August 1973 to pull out 3,550 of the approximately 45,000 military personnel and the subsequent March 1974 agreement on withdrawals for that year both prompted only NHAN DAN commentaries stressing the need for a total U.S. withdrawal.

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FOCUS ON RELATIONS, NEW DRV-THAI CONTACTS, FALL 1974

The issue of North Vietnam's relations with Thailand came to the fore again in late summer 1974. A 7 September DRV Foreign Ministry spokesman's statement on the issue of the Thai-based U.S. military forces reiterated the demand for a U.S. withdrawal but, like the 12 May Observer article, did not link it to the improvement of relations. Thus, the spokesman's statement supported the "Thai people's struggle" for a U.S. military withdrawal, but specifically called upon Bangkok only to "stop joining the United States in aggression against neighboring countries" as a "basic condition for the establishment of friendly relations among the countries in this region."

Evidence of DRV interest in establishing contacts with Thailand emerged in late September, when Hanoi for the first time granted a visa to a Thai journalist. While it seems likely that Hanoi was seeking a new means to influence Bangkok to move toward rapprochement, DRV media took limited note of the visit, commenting only in reaction to Thai press reports of conciliatory statements purportedly made by DRV spokesmen to the journalist. The Hanoi comment reaffirmed North Vietnam's desire to improve relations with Bangkok but also reiterated the view that Bangkok's cooperation with U.S. involvement in Indochina was a continuing obstacle.

An 18 October VNA interview with a DRV Foreign Ministry spokesman took issue with reports in Thai media that the visiting journalist had been told by a DRV official that Hanoi wished to open cultural relations. The spokesman maintained that it was "unrealistic" to talk about improving relations on a government level because of Bangkok's "hostile" policy toward Indochina, citing in this regard the U.S. military forces in Thailand and past involvement of Thai "mercenaries" in the Indochina conflict. At the same time, the spokesman maintained a forthcoming pose, affirming that the DRV was interested in developing contacts with the Thai "people."

A 30 October NHAN DAN commentary similarly responded to Western press accounts of the journalist's interview with NHAN DAN's chief editor Hoang Tung in which he positively appraised the possibility of improved DRV-Thai relations and suggested Southeast Asian disputes over underseas resources be discussed at a regional meeting. The paper restated Hanoi's desire for better bilateral

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relations but cited Bangkok's policies, particularly the U.S. military presence, as the impediment to rapprochement. It described the Thai and other Western reports of the interview as "doctored," but specifically corrected them only by quoting from Hoang Tung's remarks a passage indicating that negotiations on the problems of the region should come after the withdrawal of "imperialists" from the area.

II. DRV COMMENT ON THAILAND, NOVEMBER 1974-MARCH 1975

FOREIGN MINISTER TRINH'S PROPOSAL FOR DRV-THAI TALKS

Last December Hanoi publicized the first official North Vietnamese initiative aimed at normalizing relations with Bangkok. On 3 December Hanoi media released a letter, signed by North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh, to Thai Foreign Minister Charunphan Itsarangkun, which for the first time proposed negotiations on the problem of improving bilateral relations. Despite the positive suggestion of talks, the letter took a hard line on the issue of the U.S. military forces in Thailand, demanding their withdrawal before negotiations could take place. This condition represented a considerably less flexible posture than that Hanoi had introduced in the 12 May NHAN DAN Observer article which merely cited an end to U.S. Thai "collusion" against Vietnam as a necessary precondition to improving DRV-Thai relations.

CONTRADICTORY ACCOUNTS OF CONDITIONS FOR TALKS

Developments following the 3 December release of the Trinh letter, which had been dated 27 November, suggested there were sharp differences of opinion in Hanoi on how forthcoming North Vietnam should be in its overtures to Thailand. The most dramatic evidence did not come to light until seven weeks later, on 21 January, when Hanoi media released the text of the foreign policy report which Foreign Minister Trinh had delivered to North Vietnam's National Assembly on 24 December. As would be expected, in the course of reviewing recent Hanoi policy, Trinh referred to the 27 November letter to his Thai counterpart. But what was totally unexpected was that Trinh, while purportedly quoting from his November letter, in fact drastically modified its conditions for negotiations, linking bilateral talks only to

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the limitation of the action of U.S. forces against Thailand's neighbors. The two contradictory versions, as carried in both cases by VNA as well as NHAN DAN are as follows:

Trinh letter of 27 November:

If your government truly follows a policy of peace and friendship and gives up its policy of collusion with the United States, puts a complete and definitive end to the presence of U.S. troops and U.S. military bases in Thailand, and really respects the fundamental national rights of the peoples of Vietnam and the other Indochinese countries, . . . then the Government of the DRV is prepared to enter immediately into negotiations with the Thai Government on the normalization of relations between the two countries

24 December Trinh report:

The letter sent on 27 November 1974 by the DRV minister for foreign affairs to the Thai foreign minister stated: "If Thailand stops allowing the United States to use its military bases on Thai territory to threaten and encroach upon the sovereignty of neighboring countries, the DRV Government is prepared to enter into negotiations with the Thai Government on the normalization of relations between the two countries"

The version quoted by Trinh in his report to the National Assembly was compatible with the position outlined in the NHAN DAN article on 12 May 1974. And a little more than a week after Hanoi had released Trinh's foreign policy report containing this version, Hanoi on 30 January released another Trinh letter, dated 25 January, outlining an even more conciliatory proposal to the Thai foreign minister.

It seems likely that the formulation in Trinh's National Assembly report represents the position which he had wanted to take and that other hands intervened in the language of the 27 November letter. Trinh was not even in North Vietnam on that date and may have been out of the country for almost a month prior to the dispatch of the letter. East German media on 27 November revealed that Trinh was in the GDR for a "health cure" and had met with East German officials on the 26th; Hanoi media first noted his visit to East Germany on 2 December and made no reference to his health.* It seems likely that Trinh in fact left Hanoi some time

* It is not known when Trinh left the GDR, but the media reported he was in Moscow from 4 through 8 December, concluding an aid agreement, and that he returned to Hanoi on the 9th--six days after the publication of the 27 November letter.

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before 2 November when he failed to appear at a banquet for a Cambodian Front delegation which he had been hosting since its arrival on 28 October.

REFLECTIONS IN PRESS
OF CONTENDING POSITIONS

The comment on Thailand in Hanoi media immediately after the release of the 27 November letter also appeared to reflect contending policy positions, with the army paper QUAN DOI NHAN DAN taking a particularly hostile position toward Thailand. On 4 December QUAN DOI NHAN DAN published, along with the text of Trinh's letter, a commentary deprecating Thai Government claims that it had attempted to contact Hanoi and was ready for talks. The army paper warned: "One cannot believe in the goodwill of the Thai Government because of a few statements, but must primarily examine its practical actions."

The 4 December commentary in the army paper took the position that the "presence of the U.S. troops and the existence of the U.S. military bases in Thailand" are "the sole obstacle to the normalization of relations between the two peoples of Vietnam and Thailand." Thus, unlike the Trinh letter, it only raised the possibility of improved relations with the Thai "people," rather than the government. And, although its linkage of normalization with withdrawal was consistent with the letter's listing of withdrawal as a condition for talks, it did not accord with the parallel passage in the letter which reflected Trinh's basic moderation. Trinh had stated that "the only obstacle to the normalization of relations" between the two governments is Bangkok's "pursuance of a policy aimed at furthering U.S. imperialist designs of aggression and intervention in Indochina."

The formulation on normalization of relations in the Trinh letter, as released on 3 December, was faithfully repeated in the party paper NHAN DAN in a 5 December article attributed to "Commentator." In contrast to the QUAN DOI NHAN DAN commentary, the article only criticized "circles" in the Thai Government for their claims of initiatives toward Hanoi, and it positively endorsed the views of "a number of politicians such as former Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman" who favored a U.S. withdrawal.

The appearance of the Commentator article seemed to signal that some Hanoi circles viewed relations with Thailand as a major foreign policy issue, since such articles in the past have generally been limited to commenting on such key questions as

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peace negotiations and important shifts in U.S. policy. This point was underlined in January when two more Commentator articles were published on the issue of Thailand--an unusual concentration. Prior to the 5 December article, the Commentator byline had appeared only four times since the January 1973 Paris agreement.* Before the conclusion of the peace agreement, Commentator articles had appeared quite regularly, often several times a month, and it is possible that their eclipse in the post-agreement period was the result of the diminished position of some faction in the DRV leadership.

INITIAL REACTION TO THAI FOREIGN MINISTER'S LETTER

Thai Foreign Minister Charunphan responded to the 27 November Trinh letter on 30 December, with a letter affirming Thai willingness to meet and discuss differences but ignoring the issue of U.S. military forces in Thailand. He countered with clear criticism of Hanoi's policy, saying that outside support for insurgents and subversives in Thailand and interference by foreign troops in Laos and Cambodia remained obstacles to improving relations.

North Vietnam first acknowledged Foreign Minister Charunphan's letter in a 6 January DRV Foreign Ministry spokesman's interview with a VNA correspondent. Hanoi media noted that the interview was an "initial" comment on the letter and that it was still "being considered." Like the 4 December QUAN DOI NHAN DAN commentary, the spokesman's formulation on the possibility of normalization of relations focused on the U.S. military forces as the "sole obstacle," but he indicated that a U.S. withdrawal would clear the way for normal relations between the two "governments," rather than "peoples."

The assertion that the letter was "being studied and will be answered," was also made in an unusual "urgent message" from Foreign Minister Trinh to Charunphan on 11 January. The message, which protested the alleged U.S. use of Thai bases to assist the South Vietnamese Government in responding to stepped up communist

* The first two post-agreement Commentator articles--on 7 April and 8 December 1973--dealt with U.S. policies and came shortly before the resumption of consultations between Secretary Kissinger and Le Duc Tho. Two other Commentator articles in June 1974 discussed statements by Secretary Kissinger and Ambassador Martin.

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attacks, seemed aimed at reassuring Bangkok of North Vietnam's commitment to the dialog on relations, even in the face of the escalating military situation.

CONCILIATORY TRINH LETTER ON THAI ELECTION EVE

On 30 January Hanoi media released a Trinh letter, dated 25 January, officially responding to Charunphan's 30 December letter. Its content was even more moderate than the version of the November letter which Trinh quoted in his National Assembly speech. Not only did the January letter show flexibility on the question of U.S. forces, but it responded to Bangkok concerns about North Vietnamese support for the Thai insurgency. Dated the day before the 26 January Thai elections, the letter seemed calculated to highlight Hanoi's reasonableness during a period when Thai leaders would be forming a new government.

FLEXIBLE STAND ON TALKS, The 25 January Trinh letter for the
THAI-BASED U.S. FORCES first time stopped short of directly
 linking the issue of the U.S. military
forces in Thailand to bilateral DRV-Thai negotiations; instead,
it merely indicated that the DRV would discuss normalizing relations
if Bangkok took unspecified "practical actions" to demonstrate
that it desired "friendly and good-neighborly relations." The
imprecision of Trinh's new conditions seemed aimed at encouraging
Bangkok to make an effort to accommodate North Vietnamese interests.

The letter seemed to demonstrate Trinh's commitment to a policy of requiring the restriction of the U.S. military forces from activities in Indochina, rather than their withdrawal. Throughout the letter his demands concerning the U.S. forces only stipulated that they not be used against Vietnam and other Indochinese countries, and he formalized this approach in a list of "principles" for the basis of relations between the two countries. The second of Trinh's principles merely places responsibility on Bangkok to insure that the U.S. military forces are not a threat to Indochina. It read:

Not to allow any foreign country to use one's
territory as a base for direct or indirect
aggression and intervention against the other
and against other countries in the region.
The Thai side must not allow the United States
to use Thai territory against the peoples of
Vietnam and the other Indochinese countries.

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The demand that the United States remove its military forces from Thailand was raised authoritatively two days after the release of the Trinh letter, in a 1 February NHAN DAN Commentator article. But the article did not stipulate that the presence of the forces would rule out normalization of relations. It also quoted Trinh's principles calling for Bangkok to restrain the use of the forces against Indochina and to establish better relations with the DRV.

TRINH RESPONSE ON THAI INSURGENCY, CAMBODIA AND LAOS The first of the 25 January letter's three principles responded to Thai complaints voiced in Foreign Minister Charunphan's 30 December letter, about "direct or indirect" support for insurgent and subversive activities in Thailand. The principle called for:

Respect for the fundamental national rights and the right to self-determination of each people. Non-aggression and noninterference in each others' internal affairs. Nonparticipation--either directly or indirectly--in any act that may harm each others' independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity.

Previous Bangkok protests about DRV interference in Thailand had prompted Hanoi charges that Bangkok was engaging in slander and attempting to justify policies of repression. While the 12 May 1974 NHAN DAN Observer article had affirmed Vietnamese commitment to noninterference in other countries' internal affairs, it also demanded the cessation of "all slanders against the DRV."

Trinh's third, and final, principle merely endorsed the "establishment of friendly and good-neighborly relations between the two countries," and "economic and cultural exchanges on the basis of equality and mutual benefit." Trinh did not respond to another main point raised in the 30 December letter from Foreign Minister Charunphan. In addition to complaining about outside support for Thai insurgents and subversives, Charunphan's letter had cited the problem of the continued presence of "foreign"--i.e. North Vietnamese--troops in Laos and Cambodia. The 25 January Trinh letter alluded to the issue by stating that the Thai foreign minister's remarks on the struggle in Laos and Cambodia were not in conformity to "the facts of history." Trinh also reiterated North Vietnam's intention to support the Lao people and government in the implementation of the Vientiane agreement and the "Cambodian people's struggle against U.S. aggression."

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SUGGESTION OF DRV INTEREST
IN REGIONAL COOPERATION

Trinh's 25 January letter also gave some evidence that Hanoi was studying the broader question of its relations with the entire region of Southeast Asia. He seemed to adapt his remarks to the sensitivities of the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), including, Thailand, when he held that a DRV-Thai rapprochement would be beneficial to the cause of peace and friendship in Southeast Asia, and would "contribute to the creation of a zone of peace composed of independent states in this region." The concept of the establishment of a "zone of peace" in Southeast Asia is most closely identified with ASEAN and Trinh's reference to it seems calculated. The foreign minister had made a similar reference to the zone of peace concept in his 24 December National Assembly report, but he had not earlier used the formulation, for example, in a detailed article on North Vietnamese foreign policy in the January 1974 issue of the party journal HOC TAP.

Infrequent direct Hanoi media comment on ASEAN has been consistently critical, despite efforts by the organization to encourage better relations with North Vietnam. Thus, for example, an invitation from ASEAN for the DRV to send observers to its 7-9 May 1974 ministerial meeting in Jakarta was turned down by a DRV Foreign Ministry official who, according to VNA, cited the participation of some ASEAN nations in the Vietnam war, the presence of U.S. military forces in Thailand and the Philippines, and the failure of the members to recognize the PRG and Sihanouk's government.*

While NHAN DAN editor Hoang Tung's remarks in October 1974 to the visiting Thai journalist favoring regional cooperation may have signaled a more positive Hanoi attitude, they were not publicized by DRV media. Judging by accounts of the editor's statements published in the Thai paper THE NATION on 23 and 24 October, he had not only talked at some length about the possibility of a regional meeting on undersea resources, but had also strongly endorsed cooperation in general. Thus, Hoang Tung had reportedly stated:

The situation in Southeast Asia is changing. The inclination to independence and neutrality of the Southeast Asian countries is inevitable and inarrestable. Now there is a very good chance for our peoples and for our nations to gain independence and establish good relations with each other.

* North Vietnam does have diplomatic relations with two ASEAN members--Indonesia and Malaysia. A list of nations maintaining diplomatic relations with the DRV is attached as an appendix of this report.

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TIME-MARKING COMMENT SINCE THAI ELECTIONS

Since the 26 January Thai elections Hanoi media have carried low-level reports on political developments in Thailand, including the failure of Prime Minister Seni Pramot to gain a vote of confidence from the Thai National Assembly and the subsequent formation of the new government by Prime Minister Khukrit Pramot. To date Hanoi has issued no authoritative comment on recent Thai proposals to speed up the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Thailand--Seni's call for withdrawal in 18 months and Khukrit's 19 March official statement endorsing a one-year deadline for withdrawal.

Some low-level Hanoi reports have criticized suggestions by Thai officials that the forces could remain in Thailand for an indefinite period or that their withdrawal should be dependent on conditions in Southeast Asia. Prior to Khukrit's 19 March statement, a Hanoi radio report on the 14th cited him as calling for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces, to be completed "in three or six months or one year." The radio said his statement was "vague" and did not meet the "Thai people's urgent demand that the United States immediately and unconditionally withdraw all U.S. troops and dismantle all U.S. bases in Thailand."

While continuing to press the Thai Government on the U.S. forces issue in low-level comment, it appears that Hanoi will await more concrete moves by Bangkok regarding the presence of the U.S. forces and their relationship to the Indochina conflict before releasing an authoritative appraisal of the new government in Bangkok and DRV-Thai relations.

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APPENDIX

DRV DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AS OF MARCH 1975

Country Accredited to:	Date of Credentials for Current Ambass.	Country Accredited to:	Date of Credentials for Current Ambass.
Afghanistan		Korea, North	
Albania	07/22/71	Laos	
Algeria		Libya	
Argentina		Luxembourg	
Australia		Malagasy	06/21/74
Austria	11/21/73	Malaysia	
Bangladesh		Mali Republic	
Belgium		Malta	
Bulgaria	08/03/71	Mauritania	
Burma†		Mongolia	09/28/74
Burundi		Netherlands	01/11/75
Cambodia (RGNU)		New Zealand	
Cameroon	11/19/73	Niger	03/11/75
Canada		Norway	11/22/73
Chile*	05/14/73	Pakistan	
China (PRC)		Poland	09/20/74
Congo (Brazz.)		Romania	08/21/74
Cuba	02/22/74	Senegal	11/24/72
Czechoslovakia		Singapore	
Denmark		Somalia	09/21/73
Egypt	12/01/73	Sri Lanka	05/25/74
Finland		Sudan	
France	10/11/74	Sweden	11/27/74
Gambia	10/31/73	Switzerland	
Germany, East	09/26/74	Syria	02/16/71
Ghana		Tanzania	03/09/73
Guinea		Togo	
Hungary		Tunisia	
Iceland		USSR	08/15/74
India†	11/26/72	U.K.	
Indonesia	09/15/73	Upper Volta	
Iran		Yemen (Arab Rep)	
Iraq	05/15/71	Yemen (PDRY)	
Italy		Yugoslavia	
Japan		Zambia	12/20/73

† Burma and India missions of the DRV are maintained at the Consulate General level; all others are Embassy-level.

* DRV broke diplomatic ties with Chile on 25 September 1973.